

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

For

**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR COMMON INTEREST ANALYSIS AMONG
MULTIPLE USERS**

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR COMMON INTEREST ANALYSIS AMONG MULTIPLE USERS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The system and method of the present invention relates to the customization of the operation of a device, for example, the viewing of programming on a media device.

BACKGROUND

[0002] As broadcasts become more sophisticated, information relevant to broadcasts can be communicated and used to generate program information including information relevant to the user's viewing interests. Thus, profiles may be generated for users to customize the user's viewing experience. The profile may include display-related information such as default background color and content related information, for example, annotations provided by the user for certain content, interest related, for example, genre like "science fiction" and preference related, for example, higher priority given to the science fiction channel to watch science fiction programming. If the system can accommodate a multiple user environment, each user would have his own profile, treated by the system independently.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] In the system and method of the present invention, profiles that have a common interest are linked together such that when one common interest profile has an update of the common interest the other common interest profiles are notified of the update enabling the other common interest profiles to update their profiles.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004] The objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent to one skilled in the art from the following detailed description in which:

[0005] **Figure 1** illustrates one embodiment of a system which utilizes the teachings of the present invention.

[0006] **Figure 2** illustrates an alternate embodiment.

[0007] **Figure 3** illustrates multiple user profiles that may be contained in an implementation of the system of the present invention.

[0008] **Figure 4** is a simplified functional representation of one embodiment of the present invention.

[0009] **Figure 5** is a simplified flow diagram of one embodiment of the method of the present invention.

[0010] **Figure 6** illustrates an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

[0011] **Figure 7** is a pseudo-code illustration of an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0012] In the following description, for purposes of explanation, numerous details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. However, it will be apparent to one skilled in the art that these specific details are not required in order to practice the present invention. In other instances, well known electrical structures and circuits are shown in block diagram form in order not to obscure the present invention unnecessarily.

[0013] The system and method of the present invention will be described in the context of a satellite, cable or other type of broadcast system and the devices coupled thereto, such as the service provider's headend, the user's set top box, a broadcast receiver, the user's remote controller, a media storage device and the like. However, the system and method of the present invention should not be limited as such, and can be applied to other types of media accessed by multiple ways including other media devices including audio devices and computing devices.

[0014] The system and method of the present invention provides for a multi-user environment wherein each user has his own profile, and cross-referencing or linking is performed among profiles to provide useful feedback to the users of the profiles. The system provides a linkage among profiles with a common interest so that whenever a change or update occurs with respect to the common interest in one profile the other profiles that are linked to it will be notified of the change. In one embodiment, the user is notified via a message, for example through a coupled display device (e.g., a television monitor) or through an alternate medium, for example, the service provider's website or

through email to the user. In another embodiment, the notification causes an automatic update of the other linked profiles.

[0015] One embodiment of the system of the present invention is shown in **Figure 1**. The system includes a service provider 5 providing broadcast services to a controller 10, such as a set top box, which provides the broadcast to a display 15. The service provider 5 may be any one of a number of types of service providers including cable, satellite, as well as other broadcast services. The controller 10 which may be part of a television system or similar display apparatus 15 or part of a set top box 10. The service provider provides programs and program information to the controller 10 which generates programming and displays of program information in accordance with the teachings herein.

[0016] The system includes maintaining information, such as user profiles, for a user to customize his viewing experience. The information may include display-related information, for example default background color, content-related information, for example, annotations written by the user for certain content, interest-related information, for example genre, like science fiction and preference-related information, for example higher priority given to one channel to watch programming on that particular channel. In a multi-user environment, such as the home, housing a family of multiple viewers, each user would have his own profile or multiple profiles belonging to the same viewer. The environment may be more expansive than a particular home and can be defined a variety of ways, geographically and non-geographically related.

[0017] In one embodiment, as illustrated in **Figure 2**, the user profiles are stored in a storage device 20 such as memory. In the illustration, four profiles are maintained: user A profile 25, user B profile 30, user C profile 35 and user D profile 40. This profile information may be maintained by the service provider 5 or at the user's controller 10.

[0018] In one embodiment the controller includes that illustrated in the simplified block diagram of **Figure 3**. Controller 30 includes a processor 35, memory 40 and input-output 45. Memory 40 stores instructions which, when executed by the processor 35 perform the methods described herein. Input-output 45 enables the transfer of information regarding the profiles as described herein. In a multi-user environment, where each user has its own profile, it is desirable to find common interest among the profiles by cross-referencing them. The result from the cross-reference often provides

useful feedback to improve the usefulness of the profile. It is also desirable to link profiles with a common interest so that whenever a change occurs in one profile, the other profiles that are linked to it can be notified so that it can be determined whether any useful information has been added or removed from the updated profile and the other profiles can do a similar update if desired.

[0019] **Figure 4** illustrates the functionality of the mechanism for linking behavior profiles for cross-referencing and notification of updates of linked profiles. In this illustration behavior profiles 410, 415, 420 and 425 are linked in accordance with a common interest, for example, type of programming (sports). The interest evaluation engine 450 in one embodiment determines profiles that have a common interest and links them together. In the present embodiment, interest evaluation engine 450 has determined profiles 410, 415, 420 and 425 having a common interest as to the type of program (sports) which is of interest to the corresponding users. The information set forth in the behavior profiles may be used to filter 455 information such as program information and actual programming in accordance with the behavior user profiles 410, 415, 420, 425.

[0020] The system also provides that when an update is performed on any of the profiles, for example profile 410, the profiles linked via the common interest updated are notified of the update. Thus, for example, if the common interest was sports and football and behavior profile 410 was updated to eliminate the viewing of a particular football game, this information would be provided to the other behavior profiles 415, 420 and 425.

[0021] In one embodiment this notification is a message sent to the users of the corresponding profiles 415, 420 and 425, the message indicating the update performed with respect to profile 410. This message may be communicated through a variety of means including through the system itself, for example, displayed on the broadcast monitor when the user is active on the system or through a different media, for example, an email message notifying the user of the update.

[0022] In one embodiment, the user has the option of responding to the update of the one profile 410 having the common interest. A variety of responses may be performed including updating to be consistent with the update profile 410, not updating his profile or modifying his profile differently in response to the update of profile 410. In one

embodiment, the user is enabled to communicate actions to be taken in response to the notification through an input device such as a computer system coupled to the service provider's network or website or a input, such as a remote control button or button on the set top box which communicates the user's response, if any, to the notification. In an alternate embodiment the notification causes an automatic update of the linked profiles 415, 420, 425 to be consistent with the update performed in the linked profile 410.

[0023] One embodiment of the method of the present invention is illustrated by the simplified block diagram of **Figure 5**. At step 510, the profiles that have a common interest are determined. At step 520, when one common interest profile has an update to the common interest the other common interest profiles are notified of the update.

[0024] **Figure 6** illustrates an alternate embodiment of the present invention. At step 605 it is determined whether there are profiles to process. At step 610, the profile to process is identified. Thus, when the process is initiated, a first profile would be identified. At step 615, it is determined whether there are more common interests to process. Again, at the initiation of the process, if at least one common interest exists, the process proceeds to step 620 where a next common interest would be identified (at initiation, this next common interest would be the first common interest). At step 625, it is determined whether there are more profiles to review. If there are, the next profile is identified and if the profile has the same common interest as previously identified common interests and at step 640 if that profile has not yet been linked, then the profiles having the common interest are linked, step 645. Thus those profiles having a common interest are linked together and identified by that common interest. It is apparent that different sets of profiles may be identified in accordance with different common interests. The linking of the profiles may be performed a variety of ways. For example, a data structure may be established according to the common interest and the profiles having the common interest.

[0025] Referring back to **Figure 6**, the process continues at steps 625, 630, 635, 640 and 645 to analyze the profiles and common interests and at steps 605, 610 and 620 to determine if there are more common interests to process. Thus, each profile is examined to see if their common interests that apply to other profiles such that profiles having a common interest are linked together.

[0026] **Figure 7** illustrates one embodiment of a process for automatically updating profiles, for example, at regular periods of time, without involvement of the user. Thus, at step 702, for each profile, P, having a common interest, a filter is formulated using the information stored in the profile, step 704. For each profile in other available profiles step 706 the profile is evaluated 708 and it is determined whether the profile contains common interest step 710. If that is the case step 712 the result is stored, step 714, such that all items that are resulting from the filter, for example, movie titles that are the type science fiction, are maintained. A link of the profile with the common interest is then performed, step 716. At step 718, all the profiles with the common interest are linked. This is performed for each profile. At step 730, for each profile and each result, step 732, in each profile of other profiles, step 733, if the new information is not found, step 734, this is added to the common interest of that profile, step 736. Thus, the first portion of the psuedo-code up to step 718 finds which profiles share the same common interest and links them together so that an update to any of them will notify all other profiles in the list to let them retrieve the update and modify its profile accordingly. Step 730 to 736 propagates information of a common interest that is found in a subset of profiles to the other linked profiles that don't have this information in its profile.

[0027] The invention has been described in conjunction with different embodiments. It is evident that numerous alternatives, modifications, variations and uses will be apparent to those skilled in the art in light of the forgoing description.